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SUBJECT: TURKEY: SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY,
2004-5

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1. In response to reftel, the following is Mission's contribution to the 2004-5 edition of "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: the U.S. Record."

2. Turkey is a constitutional republic with a multiparty parliamentary system and a president with limited powers elected by the single-chamber parliament, the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won the majority of seats and formed a one-party government. In March 2003, AKP Chairman Recep Tayyip Erdogan was named Prime Minister. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens. There were significant improvements in a number of areas, but serious problems remained. The Government continued to restrict religious freedom and to punish some forms of non-violent expression. Human rights organizations continued to report widespread incidents of police torture and ill-treatment. The Government adopted extensive human rights-related legal reforms designed to crack down on torture and "honor killings" (the killing by immediate family members of women suspected of being unchaste), and expand freedom of religion and association. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was sometimes subject to outside influences.

3. Members of the Mission routinely meet with representatives of various political, religious, social, cultural, and ethnic groups to discuss human rights conditions and relations between these groups and the Turkish State. Mission officials also meet regularly with members of the bureaucracy, legislature, executive branch, and judiciary to encourage broad reforms, including reforms needed to meet EU accession criteria. The Mission focused on a broad range of human rights fields, including: police and judicial practices; religious freedom; freedom of expression; government ethics; trafficking in persons; and the right of return for internally displaced persons.

4. In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, the Mission worked closely with the Ministry of Defense to vet military personnel for U.S. training and checked candidates with other Embassy offices. Under a USG-Government of Turkey memorandum of intent for anti-terrorist training for law enforcement, the USG provides training organized through the Mission while the Turkish Government screens training candidates for human rights violations. To date, \$10 million in course offerings has been provided to Turkish law enforcement authorities.

5. The Mission has emphasized the importance of prosecuting, convicting, and sentencing to appropriate jail terms police who commit torture. In separate decisions in March and September, an Ankara court convicted five police officers in the Birtan Altinbas death-in-detention case and sentenced them each to four years and five months in prison. The court acquitted five co-defendants. In November, the High Court of Appeals overturned the verdict on the grounds that the sentences were too lenient, sending the case back to the lower court. The Minneapolis-based Center for Victims of Torture, along with its Turkish NGO partners, held its New Tactics in Human Rights International Symposium in Ankara September 29-October 2. The USG contributed \$895,000 to the project.

6. The teaching of English in Turkey helps build a foundation for introducing Western-oriented educational practices and concepts such as critical thinking, student-centered classrooms, team building, and conflict resolution. The Mission's English Language Office programming extends to universities in geographic regions well outside the Istanbul-Ankara-Izmir corridor. The placement of American English Language Fellows (ELFs) in university ELT and English departments, in English preparation programs, and at military service academies has provided critical exposure to American culture and values. FY05 ELF placements include universities in the conservative cities of Konya, Trabzon and Erzurum. A new component of the FY05 English language teaching program is ACCESS, a program designed to permit non-elite high school students to study English in their home cities. Approximately 200 underprivileged teenagers are presently

studying English through the ACCESS program.

17. The International Visitor Program continues to provide opportunities for professionals in all fields to be introduced to the United States and American counterparts. Participants in the FY2004 program joined a number of projects related to democracy and human rights (see appendix): four women parliamentarians participated in a project on "Women in Politics;" an official of the Ankara municipality participated in a Civic Education multi-regional project (MRP); and mayors, journalists, parliamentarians and business leaders joined projects related to local government, investigative journalism, and the U.S. presidential elections.

18. The Mission provided an Embassy officer, a former defense attorney, as guest speaker on several occasions to address members of the Turkish National Police. The speaker discussed concepts such as "due process of law" and "chain of custody" under the U.S. Constitution.

19. The 2004 U.S. presidential elections turned the spotlight on U.S. democratic practices and gave the Mission an opportunity to engage many different audiences on the U.S. electoral system. Election programming began in early October with a U.S. speaker with expertise in the electoral system, polling in election campaigns, and political parties. The Mission organized an Election Watch program that took place over 15 hours in two venues. The program at the Turkish-American Association was open to the public and included a panel discussion, screening of videotapes of the presidential debates, live election coverage, and a press conference held by the Ambassador. The Mission also held an Election Watch at the Ambassador's Residence, which attracted approximately 300 government officials, politicians, editors, and other high-level contacts. In Istanbul, more than 400 guests, including representatives from 43 media organizations, attended the November 3 "Celebration of the American Presidential Election," opened by the Consul General. A U.S. Speaker program in March 2005 will focus on post-election U.S. domestic policy.

10. The Fulbright Program in Turkey, active since 1953, encompasses scholarly exchanges at all levels, from students to senior teaching and research scholars, and includes high school teacher and administrator exchange projects. The Fulbright Program offers educational advising to Turkish students who wish to study in the U.S. Turkey ranks eighth among countries sending students to the U.S.

11. In 2001-2003, the Mission collaborated with the Institute for the Study and Development of Legal Systems (ISDLS) to undertake a Turkey-U.S. Legal Exchange Project to examine Turkish and U.S. perspectives on freedom of expression, police conduct, and trial alternatives in the criminal justice process through a series of exchanges and seminars, with funds from DRL and the Office of Citizen Exchanges. In FY04, ISDLS was awarded a continuation grant to address specific measures to improve the handling of the three issues. An ISDLS U.S. delegation traveled to Turkey in September 2004, and a Turkish delegation examining alternatives to criminal trial will travel to the U.S. in March 2005. Working with the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT), the Mission will collaborate with the Turkish Ministry of Justice to organize workshops in two cities in March on prosecution of police misconduct cases.

12. The Mission enhanced its collaboration with the NGO community through an FY04 Office of Citizen Exchanges grant on "Women's Leadership." Kent State University and its NGO partner in Turkey are planning a series of leadership conferences involving participants from women's associations in Turkey's conservative southeastern region. The Citizen Exchanges grant will support a professional exchange program for journalists in FY05 that is designed to foster ethics and journalistic responsibility among younger reporters and stress freedom of expression to editors, publishers, and media owners. A grant from the State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to the National Democratic Institute on parliamentary reform will take a group of 10 Turkish MPs to the U.S. in March 2005 to explore issues of legislative reform and meet with congressional counterparts. Another ECA-supported grant is focused on exchanges of American and Turkish high school students. Such projects support basic MPP goals to promote respect for human rights and encourage democratic practices, especially among youth and non-elite communities.

13. The Ambassador, DCM, and Mission consular officials meet regularly with officials from the Justice and Foreign Affairs ministries, as well as parliamentarians, prosecutors and judges to urge improved judicial treatment of Turkey's obligations under the Hague Convention on Child Abduction and ensure that Amcit child abduction cases move as swiftly as possible through the court system.

14. The Mission has also stressed the need to allow free religious expression for all faiths, including all Protestant denominations, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Baha'i faith, which have no legal standing in Turkey. The USG at the highest levels continues to urge the Turkish Government to reach agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the re-opening of the Halki seminary on the island of Heybeli. Mission officials continue to engage regularly Turkish Government officials in a dialogue on religious freedom. In December, the Mission supported the visit to Turkey of the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, a U.S.-based group of Greek Orthodox laymen. The Ambassador accompanied Archon representatives to a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to discuss Halki and other issues relating to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

15. In June, U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and Foreign Minister Gul presided over a signing ceremony that launched the first shelter for victims of trafficking in the country. The Municipality of Istanbul and the Human Resource Development Foundation (HRDF) located a temporary rental facility, which HRDF is currently renovating, until more permanent facilities can be secured. Under terms of the agreement, the Istanbul Municipality committed to renting the property and turning it over, cost-free, to HRDF. The Mission will bring a U.S. speaker to make presentations at an International Organization for Migration conference on Trafficking in Persons in February 2005.

Appendices

16. Speakers and Programs:

-- March 10: DVC with Bruce Hoffman, RAND Washington, on terrorism with journalists.
Funded with FY04 I-Bucks.

-- April 1-10: U.S. Speaker Walter Russell Mead, Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, for programs on U.S. foreign policy at universities and think tanks in Ankara, Adana, and Istanbul. FY04-I-Bucks.

-- April 7-14: U.S. Speaker Todd Gitlin, Professor of Journalism, Columbia University, for programs on "Media and Society" at Ankara University School of Communications, at think tanks and at universities in Istanbul and Bursa.

-- April 7: DVC with Jean Bethke Elshtain, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School, on terrorism with journalist and academics in Ankara. FY04 I-Bucks.

-- April 14-26: American Studies Traveling Seminar at Ataturk University in Erzurum, on Resources for Teaching about the United States. ECA Office for Study of the U.S.

-- April 24-28: U.S. Speaker Omar Khalidi, Aga Khan Program at MIT, for programs on Islamic Architecture and Mosque Design in the U.S. in Ankara and Istanbul. FY04 I-Bucks.

-- May 5-10: U.S. Speaker Kevin McNamara Associate Professor of American Literature, University of Houston-Clear Lake, keynote speaker at 9th Cultural Studies Symposium at Ege University in Izmir on U.S. culture and values. FY04 I-Bucks.

-- August 1-5: ECA CultureConnect program in Gaziantep and Kayseri with Georgetown basketball envoys Courtland Freeman and Omari Faulkner focusing on youth and grassroots citizen participation. Funded by ECA.

-- October 1-16: Regional Environment Office and PAS outreach program on Renewable and Efficient Energy Use in Istanbul, Ankara, and Adana. Funded by EB/IIP.

-- October 15-23: U.S. Speaker Thomas Schaller on the 2004 U.S. Presidential Elections; programs in Ankara, Adana, Istanbul and Bursa. FY05 I-Bucks.

-- October 18-20-25: Presentations on the U.S. Elections by the Ambassador at universities in Izmir, Konya, and Kayseri. Post-funded.

-- October 21-24: U.S. Speaker Ann Symons, past president of the American Library Association at the 50th anniversary symposium of the Ankara University library school, established in 1954 with U.S. funding and support. FY05 I-Bucks.

-- October 27-November 4: U.S. Speaker Giles Gunn, keynote speaker at the 29th annual American Studies of Turkey (ASAT);

programs in Ankara and Istanbul. FY05 I-Bucks.
-- November 2- 3: U.S. Presidential Election Watch programs in Ankara and Istanbul. Post-funded.

-- December 5-11: U.S. Speaker Max Boot, Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, on U.S. Foreign Policy, for programs in Ankara, Adana, and Istanbul. FY05 I-Bucks.

-- December 8-9: American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) U.S. delegation programs in Istanbul and Ankara. Funded by ECA grant.

17. International Visitors Projects:

-- SERIN, Ayten, Reporter, Hurriyet Mass Daily, Istanbul: MRP "Print Journalism," February 19 - March 11, 2004.

-- YAGIZ, Senkal, Reporter, News Center, SHOW TV, Istanbul: MRP "TV Broadcasting," April 1 - 22, 2004.

-- AKYIL, Osman, General Manager, Akyil Textile Company, Diyarbakir: MRP "U.S. Trade Policy and the World Economy," April 8 - 29, 2004.

-- SARIGUL, Mustafa, Mayor of Sisli, Istanbul: Individual project on "Presidential Campaigning," June 5 - 20, 2004.

-- PASAOGLU, Serife Aydan, Foreign Relations Director, AKUT Turkey Search and Rescue: MRP "Humanitarian Responses to Crises and Disasters," July 15 - August 5, 2004.

-- TUNCAY, Didem, Diplomatic Affairs Reporter, NTV TV, Ankara: MRP "Investigative Journalism," August 5 - 26, 2004.

-- CAKIROZER, Utku, Diplomatic Correspondent, Milliyet Newspaper, Ankara: MRP "Investigative Journalism," August 5 - 26, 2004.

-- INCEKARA, Halide, Justice and Development Party (AKP) Member of Parliament from Istanbul; OKUDUCU, Guldal, Republican People's Party (CHP) Member of Parliament from Istanbul; SAHIN, Fatma, Justice and Development Party (AKP) Member of Parliament from Gaziantep: ITT on "Women in U.S. Politics," August 28 - September 18, 2004.

-- CAVUSOGLU, Mevlut, Justice and Development Party (AKP) Member of Parliament from Antalya: MRP "U.S. Presidential Campaign," September 9 - 30, 2004.

-- SIPAHIOGLU, Hasan, Mayor of Alanya, Antalya: Individual grant on "Development, Preservation and Tourism," September 13 - October 1, 2004.

-- BIRBILEN, Mr. Mustafa, Librarian, Greater Municipality of Gaziantep: Individual project on "U.S. Political, Social and Educational Issues," October 4 - 22, 2004.

-- TUTAR, Berkan, Deputy Foreign News Editor, Yeni Safak Daily, Istanbul: EU/RP "U.S. Foreign Policy Challenges I," October 18 - November 5, 2004.

-- ERGUDER, Tufan, Chief, Istanbul Narcotics Division, TNP: MRP "Combating International Crime," January 6 - 27, 2005.

-- BEKLEVIC, Tuna, President, Economists Platform (NGO), Istanbul: Individual project on "U.S. Political, Economic and Social Issues," January 10 - 28, 2005.

-- IBA, Mr. Seref, Deputy Director, Department of Laws and Resolutions, Turkish Grand National Assembly, Ankara: Individual project on "The Bicameral System: How the U.S. Congress Staff System Works," January 10 - 28, 2005.